

and countless others about how the resources that we have been providing them have helped them through this pandemic. From the Rio Grande Valley to Amarillo—opposite ends of our State—from Tyler to Orange in the eastern part of the State and all points in between, I masked up and met with Texans who are working overtime to keep their communities safe and to provide for their families. All the while, I continue to hold virtual conversations and telephone townhalls to hear from my constituents and share information about what we are doing to be helpful to them.

These conversations, as I said a moment ago, always help me better understand the effectiveness of the legislation we passed and provide valuable feedback about what is needed in the next coronavirus relief bill.

With the school year now officially underway in most of Texas, additional support for our students and teachers is one of my top priorities. I have had the chance to speak with K–12 students and teachers in Odessa, Lubbock, and Canyon, and college students and administrators in Angelo State University in San Angelo, as well as Texas Tech University and Texas Tech Health Science Center in Amarillo. Some joined us socially distanced on campus and others connected virtually.

I was able to hear from both students and teachers about this unprecedented school year and the challenges—the extra challenges—brought on by COVID–19. Whether in person, online, or some combination of the two, education looks a lot different this year, and we need to provide schools with the funding to keep kids in the classrooms safe and those at home on track for a great education.

Congress has already passed \$30 billion in emergency relief for education, including more than \$2.6 billion for Texas. This funding has helped our school districts, colleges, and universities prepare for the fall, but, to be honest, more is needed.

For those learning in person, additional funding can cover cleaning services and equipment to prevent children from catching and spreading the virus. For those learning virtually, it could provide additional hardware and internet hotspots so they can do their studies online.

I visited one high school in Ector County—that is Odessa, TX—where they are using a blended or hybrid in-person and online instruction model. Ector County ISD began this year with online instruction for students who have internet access at home and in-person instruction for those who did not. Of the roughly 33,000 students in the district, about 4,200 were in the classroom on the first day. And I can assure you, it is not the only school district in Texas whose students have difficulty accessing the technology needed to learn from home.

More than 2 million Texas households don't have reliable internet ac-

cess, and it is leaving our students on the wrong side of the digital divide. Internet access is no longer a luxury or just a convenience; it has become a necessity, and we need to do more to ensure that students across Texas and across the Nation have access to reliable broadband.

The CARES Act, which we passed in March, provides some relief on this front. It gave libraries \$50 million in grants for digital connection. The demand for these funds was much higher than was available, and it became obvious we need to do more to help those who are on the wrong side of the digital divide.

The Senator from West Virginia, Mr. MANCHIN, and I teamed up to include and introduce the ACCESS the Internet Act, which will provide funding to both the Department of Education and libraries to make reliable internet a reality.

In addition to supporting virtual learning, this would also make access to telehealth more available to families. This has really been one of the most surprising positive developments out of this pandemic, and that is actually greater access to healthcare through telehealth, both physical and Mental Health Services online.

Our bill includes funding for healthcare providers, including the Department of Veterans Affairs, to get more patients connected so they can utilize these telehealth services. As we make a push for progress on the next relief bill, I will continue fighting for resources for our students and teachers, and that includes reliable access to the internet.

Despite this August work period looking much different from years prior, I was still able to connect with tens of thousands of Texans virtually and over the phone and safely meet many of them in person. As I traveled, I was able to see how schools, our healthcare facilities, our food banks, local governments, and more have been able to use the Federal coronavirus funding provided for in the CARES Act. The feedback and insight I received was invaluable to my work in the Senate, and it is more important than ever as we continue negotiations on the next coronavirus relief bill.

This is going to be a busy month in the Senate. We need to pass legislation to bolster our response to this virus, support our students and teachers, help those in need of financial assistance, and ensure that our healthcare response remains robust.

We are just 3 weeks away from the end of the fiscal year, including a government shutdown unless we can reach an agreement on a funding bill. Complicating matters even further, we are at the peak of hurricane season, which may not seem like as big a deal in DC, but I guarantee, we have our eyes on these tropical storms in the Gulf of Mexico that could well end up onshore. Hurricane Hanna, for example, struck South Texas in July and hit our farm-

ers and producers hard, as well as flooding out many, many homes and displacing families. A couple of weeks ago, Hurricane Laura tore through the Gulf of Mexico.

Though the brunt of Laura hit other neighbors in Louisiana, for which we are very sorry, we are very glad that it did little damage in Southeast Texas, but it still did some significant damage. I was able to join the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, and Senator CRUZ for a visit to Orange to survey the damage and speak with local officials about the impact of the storm. I am committed to providing my constituents in Texas with the resources needed to recover from whatever this hurricane season may bring. I will be keeping a close eye on the weather forecast as we move through what has already been an active hurricane season.

We have a lot of work to do in the next few weeks. Though we weren't able to make progress on a coronavirus bill in July, I was on almost virtually daily conference calls with the White House and Secretary Mnuchin talking about the way forward. I am more optimistic today than I have been to this point that we will, ultimately, reach an agreement. I hope my colleagues have also heard from their constituents about how important relief is and that we can come together at such a critical point in our fight against COVID–19.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The Democratic leader is recognized.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, in the 3 weeks since the Senate last met, America eclipsed 6 million confirmed cases of COVID–19. Nearly 190,000 Americans have died, and those totals climb by tragic amounts each day. Too many businesses remain closed, schools begin the year under a dark cloud of uncertainty, and our economy faces the greatest crisis since the Great Depression.

The United States is 11.5 million jobs short of where we were at the start of February, and the number of jobs that have been permanently lost is rising at an alarming rate. All of this reflects a tragic reality: President Trump has led the worst response to COVID–19 of any nation on Earth. It is what it is.

The economic pain of the pandemic was mitigated by our action in March when Democrats insisted on a robust stimulus bill that became the CARES Act. One of our policies included in that bill, enhanced unemployment benefits, has kept nearly 12 million Americans from poverty. Those benefits have

now mostly expired, and the stimulus provided by the CARES Act has been exhausted. The pandemic and economic hardship for millions of American workers and families, however, is ongoing and painful.

Speaker PELOSI and I have been trying to negotiate with the White House in another round of relief. It has been arduous. Democrats offered to meet our Republican colleagues in the middle, but the White House has refused to make any significant compromise.

Here in the Senate, the Republican majority leader has kept the Senate on “pause” while the Nation suffered. When they tried to draft a relief package in July, Senate Republicans flailed for 2 weeks before announcing a series of separate, incoherent proposals that lacked the support of—surprise—Senate Republicans. It was so unpopular within the Republican conference that Leader MCCONNELL never even brought it up for a vote.

Now, after more than 4 months of long inaction—after sitting on the sidelines while we tried to negotiate with a recalcitrant White House—Senate Republicans are finally realizing the damage their pause—the McConnell pause—has done to the American economy and our Nation’s health. As they scramble to make up for this historic mistake, Senate Republicans appear dead set on another bill that doesn’t come close to addressing the problems in our country.

The Republicans are going to cut their original, inadequate \$1 trillion “skinny” bill in half—maybe more—and put it up for a vote this week. Of course, it had no input—zero input—from the Democrats—completely partisan. In this Chamber, you need bipartisanship to get anything done. The Republicans call this a “skinny”—or “targeted”—proposal, but it would be more appropriate to call it “emaciated.” Shockingly, as the pain from this pandemic gets bigger and bigger, the Republicans think smaller and smaller. They are moving backward. Their proposal is completely inadequate and, by every measure, fails to meet the needs of the American people—with no money for rental assistance, nutrition assistance, the census, safe elections, and so many other things.

The bill, amazingly, will do almost nothing to help State and local governments that have already been forced to cut a million jobs since the pandemic began. This bill actually goes backward from the last Republican proposal. It does not even allow States to use existing relief funds to cover lost revenues.

Even worse, this latest and sorriest Republican proposal is laden with poison pills that our colleagues know the Democrats would never support. The bill doesn’t provide enough funding to help our schools reopen safely—not close to what school superintendents say they need—but it includes funding for a partisan school choice program that has been long pushed by hard-

right conservatives and Secretary DeVos. It provides immunity to corporations that put their workers in harm’s way, which, sadly, seems to be the only thing that the Republicans can consistently agree on. It even includes a provision that could fast-track coal mining operations because, God forbid, our Republican friends miss an opportunity to reward corporate polluters in their coronavirus relief bill.

The Republicans call their bill “targeted.” Maybe they mean it is targeted to corporate donors. The presence of these poison pills should remove every shred of doubt that the true intent of this bill is anything but political. If Leader MCCONNELL and the Republican majority were trying to achieve a result, they wouldn’t draft such a lame, partisan bill, loaded with poison pills, and rush it to the floor.

May we have order, please?

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CASIDY). Yes, sir.

Mr. Leader, be careful not to impugn the motives of another. The leader suggested corporate donors. I issue that warning.

Mr. SCHUMER. The truth is, if you wanted to draft a bill that was certain to fail, this is it. This is one of the most cynical moves I have ever seen. We all know what is going on here. Leader MCCONNELL had to create the most paltry, partisan, cynical bill because he has 20 Members of his caucus who don’t want to support anything. By his own admission, they want zero dollars, so Leader MCCONNELL keeps whittling down the Republican proposal until he can find something—anything—that he can claim his party supports. He had to throw in the right wing’s favorite goodies to sweeten the pot to even approach the number of votes in his caucus to make it look like a Republican bill that had broad support.

Leader MCCONNELL knows this bill won’t pass, and he knows that most of his Members don’t want it to pass. Amazingly, he seems happy with that situation. This is one of the most cynical moves I have ever seen in the middle of a pandemic—when Americans are crying out for relief.

This political exercise on the Republican side bears no relationship to the needs of our country. It has nothing to do with our States, our workers, our families, with opening up schools safely, or with what healthcare workers really need. It has everything to do with finding the bare minimum that Senate Republicans can support. While facing the greatest economic crisis in 75 years and the greatest health crisis in a century, Leader MCCONNELL isn’t searching for bipartisan progress; he is looking for political cover.

As we begin the final work period before the November elections, the Democrats will keep pushing for a bipartisan, bicameral agreement that actually meets the urgent needs of the American people. For the good of the country, I hope—I pray—my Repub-

lican colleagues will join us in that effort.

POSTMASTER GENERAL

Mr. President, on another matter, tens of millions of Americans rely on the post office every day for their medication, veterans’ benefits, food, and paychecks. This year, tens of millions of Americans will also rely on the post office to vote in our national election. As President Trump deliberately attempts to erode Americans’ confidence in voting by mail, his hand-picked Postmaster General, Mr. DeJoy—a longtime Republican fundraiser and Trump donor—faces serious questions about politicizing the post office during an election year.

During his short tenure, Mr. DeJoy instituted drastic service changes to the Postal Service that caused enormous backlogs and delays in mail delivery. Only a massive public outcry from both sides of the aisle caused him to reverse his course, and now reports came out over the weekend that alleged that Mr. DeJoy, while he was the CEO of New Breed Logistics, may have been involved in an illegal straw donor scheme in which he pressured employees into financially supporting Republican candidates, using company bonuses as reimbursement.

If these reports are true, they constitute a serious violation of campaign finance law. The House has already announced it will investigate these claims. So it is time to state the obvious: The postal Board of Governors should suspend Mr. DeJoy as Postmaster General while these serious allegations are under investigation.

In the middle of a pandemic, America must have faith and confidence in the post office and those who lead it.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. JOHNSON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

NOMINATION OF BRETT H. LUDWIG

Mr. JOHNSON. Mr. President, it is my privilege to recommend the Honorable Brett H. Ludwig to be the U.S. district judge for the Eastern District of Wisconsin. Judge Ludwig passed the Senate Judiciary Committee with bipartisan support. I look forward to the full Senate voting to confirm him today.

Since 2017, Judge Ludwig has served the people of Wisconsin on the U.S. Bankruptcy Courts for both the Eastern and Western Districts of Wisconsin.

Judge Ludwig was born in rural north central Wisconsin and spent his childhood in the city of Colby, the birthplace of the cheese that bears its name. His grandparents and great-grandparents were dairy farmers, instilling in their children and grandchildren the values of hard work and